

LEVI MCLAUGHLIN

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, North Carolina State University, Withers 425
Raleigh NC 27695-8103 lmclaug2@ncsu.edu

Updated November 26, 2025

CURRENT POSITION

August 2024 to present

Professor, North Carolina State University, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

PREVIOUS ACADEMIC POSITIONS

July 2018 to July 2024

Associate Professor, North Carolina State University, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies.

September 2019 to April 2020

Toyota Visiting Professor of Japanese Studies, Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan (on leave from North Carolina State University).

July 2012 to June 2018

Assistant Professor, North Carolina State University, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies.

September 2009 to July 2012

Assistant Professor (tenure track), **Wofford College**, Department of Religion. Responsible for Anthropology of Religion and Religions of East Asia.

August 2011 to July 2012

Post-Doctoral Scholar, University of Iowa, Center for Asian and Pacific Studies and Adjunct Assistant Professor of Anthropology (on leave from Wofford College).

April 2002 to March 2004

Translator / Researcher (*chōsain* 調査員), Institute for the Study of Japanese Culture and Classics, Kokugakuin University, Tokyo.

EDUCATION

Princeton University, Department of Religion

Ph.D. (Jacqueline I. Stone, advisor). September 2004 to August 2009. Ph.D. awarded November 2009.

University of Tokyo, Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology

Monbushō Scholarship Graduate Research Student in Religious Studies (Shimazono Susumu, advisor). April 2000 to March 2002.

University of Toronto, Department of East Asian Studies

Master of Arts (Neil McMullin, advisor). Graduated March 1998.

University of Toronto, Department of East Asian Studies

Bachelor of Arts in Japanese Studies. Graduated with High Distinction, June 1996.

Kwansei Gakuin University, Nishinomiya, Japan. Japanese Studies Exchange Program. September 1993 to August 1994.

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Associate of the **Royal Conservatory of Music**, Toronto. Diploma in Piano Performance (A.R.C.T.). Awarded January 1992.

LANGUAGES

Modern Japanese (fluent), Classical Japanese (proficient), Sino-Japanese (reading ability), French (proficient), German (reading ability).

FELLOWSHIPS, SCHOLARSHIPS, and AWARDS

Simon and Hallsworth Visiting Professorship, University of Manchester (UK), Spring 2026.

Faculty Fellow, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, North Carolina State University, seminar on “Human, Futures, Sustainabilities,” spring 2025.

American Academy of Religion Individual Research Grant, 2023.

Association for Asian Studies Northeast Asia Council grant for short-term research travel to Japan, 2023.

Toyota Visiting Professor in Japanese Studies, Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, September 2019 to April 2020.

Luce / ACLS Fellowship in Religion, Journalism & International Affairs, July 2018 to June 2019.

NC State College of Humanities and Social Sciences Outstanding Junior Faculty Award in the Humanities, 2017-2018.

The Japan Foundation Japanese Studies Fellowship, fall 2018 (declined).

Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation U.S.-Japan Network for the Future Cohort III, June 2014 to June 2016. Funded research meetings in Washington D.C., Montana, and Japan.

NC State College of Humanities and Social Sciences Junior Faculty Development Award, spring 2014.

Post-Doctoral Scholar, Center for Asian and Pacific Studies, University of Iowa, 2011-2012 academic year. Appointed Adjunct Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Iowa for spring 2012.

Visiting Research Fellow, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, summer 2011.

Association for Asian Studies Northeast Asia Council grant for short-term research travel to Japan, summer 2010.

Harvard University Edwin O. Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies Postdoctoral Fellowship, 2009-2010 (declined).

Mellon / American Council of Learned Societies Dissertation Completion Fellowship, 2009-2010 (declined).

Mrs. Giles Whiting Fellowship for dissertation completion, 2008 to 2009.

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Graduate Fellow, Center for the Study of Religion at Princeton University, 2008 to 2009. Participated in the workshop on Religion and Public Life under Professor Robert Wuthnow.

The Japan Foundation Japanese Studies Fellowship, fall 2007.

Princeton University Graduate Fellowship, 2004 to 2009.

Princeton University East Asian Studies Prize, 2004 to 2009.

Presidential Scholar of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University, March 2004 (declined).

Monbushō Scholarship, Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, April 2000 to March 2002.

SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS

Book

McLaughlin, Levi. *Soka Gakkai's Human Revolution: The Rise of a Mimetic Nation in Modern Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019.

Published by Kodansha (Japan) as *Sōka gakkai: gendai Nihon no moyō kokka* 創価学会—現代日本の模様国家, 2024.

Edited Books

McLaughlin, Levi, ed. "Politics and Governance." In McMullen, Matthew and Jolyon B. Thomas, eds. *The New Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religion*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2025. Editor for section of six chapters.

Ehrhardt, George, Axel Klein, Levi McLaughlin, and Steven S. Reed, eds. *Kōmeitō: Religion and Politics in Japan*. University of California, Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies Japan Research Monographs, 2014.

Edited Special Issues of Journals

McLaughlin, Levi and Tomomi Yamaguchi, eds. "Behind the Scenes of Media and Legal Responses to the Abe Assassination." *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* Vol. 22 Issue 10 (1 November 2024).
<https://apjff.org/2024/10/special-issue-toc>

Baffelli, Erica, Jane Caple, Levi McLaughlin, and Frederik Schröer, eds. "The Aesthetics and Emotions of Religious Belonging: Examples from the Buddhist World." *Numen* Vol. 68 Nos. 5-6 (December 2021).

Fountain, Philip, Levi McLaughlin, Michael Feener, and Patrick Daly, eds. "Salvage and Salvation: Religion, Disaster Response, and Reconstruction in Asia." *Asian Ethnology* Vol. 75 No. 1 (June 2016).

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Refereed Journal Articles

McLaughlin, Levi. "Introduction: Behind the Scenes of Media and Legal Responses to the Abe Assassination." *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, Vol. 22 Issue 10 (1 November 2024):
<https://apjff.org/2024/10/mclaughlin>

Onaga, Lisa, Chelsea Szendi Schieder, Kristina Burhman, Julia Mariko Jacoby, Kohta Juraku, David H. Slater, Anna Wiemann, Alexander Dekant, Stella Winter, Jacob Herzum, Levi McLaughlin, Angela Marie Ortiz. "Sources of Disaster: A Roundtable Discussion on New Epistemic Perspectives in Post-3.11 Japan." *East Asian Science, Technology and Society: An International Journal*. Vol. 15 Issue 4 (2021), 482-496.

McLaughlin, Levi. "Beethoven and Buddhism in a Japanese Religion: Culture as Cultivation in Soka Gakkai." *Numen* Vol. 68 Nos. 5-6 (December 2021), 593-618.

Baffelli, Erica, Jane Caple, Levi McLaughlin, and Frederik Schröer. "The Aesthetics and Emotions of Religious Belonging: Examples from the Buddhist World." *Numen* Vol. 68 Nos. 5-6 (December 2021), 421-435.

McLaughlin, Levi, Aike P. Rots, Jolyon Baraka Thomas, and Chika Watanabe. "Why Scholars of Religion Must Investigate the Corporate Form." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* Vol. 88 Issue 3 (September 2020), 693-725.

McLaughlin, Levi. "Japanese Religious Responses to COVID-19: A Preliminary Report." *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* Vol. 18 Issue 9 No. 3 (1 May 2020): <https://apjff.org/2020/9/McLaughlin.html>

McLaughlin, Levi. "Hard Lessons Learned: Tracking Changes in Media Presentations of Religion and Religious Aid Mobilization After the 1995 and 2011 Disasters in Japan." *Asian Ethnology* Vol. 75 No. 1 (June 2016), 105-138.

Fountain, Philip and Levi McLaughlin. "Salvage and Salvation: An Introduction." *Asian Ethnology* Vol. 75 No. 1 (June 2016), 1-28.

McLaughlin, Levi. "Religion in Japan Since the 2011 Tsunami." *Oxford Handbooks Online* (12 April 2016): <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935420.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199935420-e-29>

McLaughlin, Levi. "Komeito's Soka Gakkai Protestors and Supporters: Religious Motivations for Political Activism in Contemporary Japan." *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, Vol. 13, Issue 40, No. 1 (12 October 2015): <http://japanfocus.org/-Levi-McLaughlin/4386/article.html>

McLaughlin, Levi. "What Have Religious Groups Done After 3.11? Part 1: A Brief Survey of Religious Mobilization after the Great East Japan Earthquake Disasters." *Religion Compass* 7/8 (August 2013), 294-308.

McLaughlin, Levi. "What Have Religious Groups Done After 3.11? Part 2: From Religious Mobilization to 'Spiritual Care.'" *Religion Compass* 7/8 (August 2013), 309-325.

McLaughlin, Levi. "Did Aum Change Everything? What Sōka Gakkai Before, During, and After the Aum Shinrikyō Affair Tells Us About the Persistent 'Otherness' of New Religions in Japan." Article for special issue "Japanese Religion Since 1995" of the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. Erica Baffelli and Ian Reader, eds.

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(April 2012), 51-75.

McLaughlin, Levi. "All Research is Fieldwork: A Practical Introduction to Studying in Japan as a Foreign Researcher." *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* Vol. 30, Issue 1, No. 10 (26 July 2010): <http://japanfocus.org/-Levi-McLaughlin/3388/article.html>

McLaughlin, Levi. "Faith and Practice: Bringing Religion, Music and Beethoven to Life in Soka Gakkai." *Social Science Japan Journal* 6-2 (October 2003), 161-179.

Refereed Chapters in Books

McLaughlin, Levi. "Perennial Fears, Novel Responses: The Unification Church in Japan after the Abe Assassination." In McElwain, Kenneth M, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Daniel M. Smith, eds. *Japan Decides 2024: The Japanese General Election*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2025, 237-256.

Klein, Axel and Levi McLaughlin. "A Costly Coalition: Kōmeitō's Enduring Partnership with the LDP." In McElwain, Kenneth M, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Daniel M. Smith, eds. *Japan Decides 2024: The Japanese General Election*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2025, 75-90.

McLaughlin, Levi. "Catastrophe." In Hammerschlag, Sarah, ed. *Critical Terms for Religious Studies, 2nd Edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2025, 13-28.

McLaughlin, Levi. "Politics and Governance." In McMullen, Matthew and Jolyon B. Thomas, eds. *The New Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religion*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2025, 351-365.

McLaughlin, Levi. "Constitutional Buddhism: Japanese Buddhists and Constitutional Law." In Ginsburg, Tom and Benjamin Schonthal, eds. *Buddhism and Comparative Constitutional Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023, 241-271.

Klein, Axel and Levi McLaughlin. "Kōmeitō in 2021: Strategizing Between the LDP and Sōka Gakkai." In Pekkanen, Robert J., Steven R. Reed, and Daniel M. Smith, eds. *Japan Decides 2021: The Japanese Lower House Election*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, 71-85.

Klein, Axel and Levi McLaughlin. "Kōmeitō: The Party and its Place in Japanese Politics." In Pekkanen, Robert J. and Saadia M. Pekkanen, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022, 201-222.

McLaughlin, Levi. "The Impact of COVID-19 on Religion in Japan." In Lüddeckens, Dorothea, Philipp Hetmanczyk, Pamela E. Klassen, and Justin B. Stein, eds. *The Routledge Handbook of Religion, Medicine, and Health*. London and New York: Routledge, 2021, 515-520.

McLaughlin, Levi. "Soka Gakkai's Impact on Constitutional Revision Attempts." In Hardacre, Helen, Timothy S. George, Keigo Komamura, and Franziska Seraphim, eds. *Japanese Constitutional Revisionism and Civic Activism*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2021, 161-174.

McLaughlin, Levi. "Disasters." In Baffelli, Erica, Andrea Castiglioni, and Fabio Rambelli, eds. *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Japanese Religions*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2021, 27-33.

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McLaughlin, Levi. "The Soka Gakkai Economy: Measuring Cycles of Exchange That Power Japan's Largest Buddhist Lay Organization." In Brox, Trine and Elizabeth Williams-Oerberg, eds. *Buddhism and Business: Merit, Material Wealth, and Morality in the Global Market Economy*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2020, 76-92.

McLaughlin, Levi. "How to Do Fieldwork: Studying Japan In and Outside Japan." In Kottmann, Nora and Cornelia Reiher, eds. *Studying Japan: Research Designs, Fieldwork and Methods*. Baden Baden: Nomos, 2020, 157-168.

Klein, Axel, and Levi McLaughlin. "Kōmeitō 2017: New Complications." In Pekkanen, Robert J., Steven R. Reed, Ethan Scheiner, and Daniel M. Smith, eds. *Japan Decides 2017: The Japanese General Election*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, 53-76.

McLaughlin, Levi. "The Rise of the 'Clinical Religionist': Taniyama Yōzō" (65-67) and "Two Self-Sacrificing Bureaucrats: Iizuka and Akabashi" (99-102). In Samuels, Jeffrey, Justin Thomas McDaniel, and Mark Michael Rowe, eds. *Figures of Buddhist Modernity in Asia*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016.

McLaughlin, Levi. "Electioneering as Religious Practice: A History of Sōka Gakkai's Political Activities to 1970." In Ehrhardt et al., eds. *Kōmeitō: Politics and Religion in Japan*. Berkeley: IEAS, 2014, 51-82.

Ehrhardt, George, Axel Klein, Levi McLaughlin, and Steven Reed. "Kōmeitō: The Most Understudied Party of Japanese Politics." In Ehrhardt et al., eds. *Kōmeitō: Politics and Religion in Japan*. Berkeley: IEAS, 2014, 3-22.

Ehrhardt, George, Axel Klein, Levi McLaughlin, and Steven Reed. "Kōmeitō: Politics and Religion in Japan." In Ehrhardt et al., eds. *Kōmeitō: Politics and Religion in Japan*. Berkeley: IEAS, 2014, 269-275.

McLaughlin, Levi. "Sōka Gakkai in Japan." In Prohl, Inken and John Nelson, eds. *Brill Handbook of Contemporary Japanese Religion*. Brill: Handbooks on Contemporary Religion, 2012, 269-308.

Refereed Translation

McLaughlin, Levi. "Using Buddhist Resources in Post-disaster Japan: Taniyama Yōzō's 'Vihāra Priests and Buddhist Chaplains.'" In Salguero, Pierce, ed., *Buddhism and Medicine: An Anthology of Modern Sources*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019, 164-176.

Invited Translations

Selected articles for the *Encyclopedia of Shinto* (English edition of the *Shintō jiten*. Tokyo: Kōbundō. Kokugakuin University, Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics, 1994). Accessible online at: <http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/> Completed over one hundred entries.

Takemura, Makio. "Zen and Pure Land: An Important Aspect of D.T. Suzuki's Interpretation of Buddhism." *The Eastern Buddhist* Vol. XXXIV No. 2 (2002), 117-140.

Long Journey to Japan. Bilingual book and accompanying display items for exhibition at the National Science Museum (Ueno), Japan. Tokyo: NHK Promotions (September to November, 2001).

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Book Reviews

Faith in Mount Fuji: The Rise of Independent Religion in Early Modern Japan. By Janine Anderson Sawada. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2022. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* Vol. 91 Issue 4, December 2023, 936-938.

Faking Liberties: Religious Freedom in American-Occupied Japan. By Jolyon Baraka Thomas. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018. *Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 79 Issue 2, May 2020, 514-517.

Women in Japanese Religions. By Barbara Ambros. New York: NYU Press, 2015. *Journal of Japanese Studies* 44:1, Winter 2017, 160-165.

Beyond the Mushroom Cloud: Commemoration, Religion, and Responsibility after Hiroshima. By Yuki Miyamoto. Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press, 2012. *Journal of Japanese Studies* 41:1, Winter 2015, 153-158.

Neither Monk nor Layman: Clerical Marriage in Modern Japanese Buddhism. By Richard M. Jaffe. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011 [2001]. *Pacific Affairs* Vol. 84, No. 4, December 2011, 765-766.

Prophet Motive: Deguchi Onisaburō, Oomoto, and the Rise of New Religions in Imperial Japan. By Nancy K. Stalker. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008. *Religious Studies Review* Volume 36, No. 3, September 2010, 247.

When Tengu Talk: Hirata Atsutane's Ethnography of the Other World. By Wilburn Hansen. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008. *Religious Studies Review* Volume 36, No. 3, September 2010, 244-245.

Selected Refereed Works in Progress

“Essays on Japanese Buddhism in Honor of Jacqueline I. Stone.” Festschrift journal special issue of the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* co-edited with Lori Meeks and Mark M. Rowe. Includes a co-authored introduction and one sole-authored article titled “Reading to Completion: Discipleship Strategies and the Future of Soka Gakkai in Japan.” Expected early 2026.

Cultivating the Nation: Politics and Religion in Contemporary Japan (working title). Book manuscript requested by University of Chicago Press. Submission expected summer 2026.

SELECTED SCHOLARLY PRESENTATIONS

Refereed

Discussant for 15 March 2025 panel titled “Religion, Politics, and Public Reaction in Japan: Controversies Involving the Unification Church since the Abe Assassination” at the Association for Asian Studies annual meeting, Columbus, OH.

“An Inverted Rebuke: How Nichiren Buddhist Remonstrance Turned Inward in Soka Gakkai.” Presentation 25 November 2024 for panel titled “Rebuking Error, Inverting Authority, and Transforming Institutions: Remonstrance in the Nichiren Buddhist Tradition” at the American Academy of Religion annual meeting, San Diego, CA.

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“The Karma of Gender: How Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Members of Soka Gakkai in Japan Challenge Temporalities and Institutional Fixity.” Presentation 25 June 2024 for panel titled “Queer and Trans Studies in Religion Across Cultures and Contexts” at the online session of the American Academy of Religion annual meeting.

“Children of Faith: The Impact of Apostates and Adherent Critics on Japanese Religion after the Abe Assassination.” Presentation 19 August 2023 for panel titled “What the Abe Assassination Reveals about Religion in Contemporary Japan’s Political Culture” at the European Association for Japanese Studies meeting, Ghent, Belgium.

“Religion-Affiliated Political Engagement after the Abe Assassination.” Presentation 18 March 2023 for panel titled “Religion and Politics in Japan after the Abe Assassination” at the Association for Asian Studies annual meeting, Boston, MA.

“Music and Sound in Japanese Religions.” Roundtable presentation 17 March 2023 for the Association for Asian Studies annual meeting, Boston, MA.

“Empty Offertory Boxes: Poverty and Precarity within Contemporary Japanese Religions.” Discussant for 22 November 2021 panel session at the American Academy of Religion annual meeting, San Antonio, TX (online).

“Management Pedagogies, Subject Formation, and the Corporate Form.” Roundtable 20 November 2021 for the American Academy of Religion annual meeting, San Antonio, TX (online).

“Inclusion and Exclusion in (the Study of) Japanese Religions.” Discussant for 26 August 2021 panel session at the European Association for Japanese Studies meeting (online).

“Aesthetics of Buddhist Belonging in/through Objects and Action.” Roundtable 1 July 2021 for the UK Association for Buddhist Studies annual meeting (online).

“Practicing Beethoven as Buddhism: The Role of Classical Music in Soka Gakkai’s Past and Future.” Presentation 9 December 2020 for panel titled “The Aesthetics and Emotions of Religious Belonging: Case Studies from Buddhist Communities” at the American Academy of Religion annual meeting (online).

“Uses of ‘Shinto’ in Nippon Kaigi: Coming to Terms with an Elusive Category.” Presentation 2 December 2020 for panel titled “Shinto Epistemologies in Global Perspective: Rethinking Gender, Nation, and Ritual” at the American Academy of Religion annual meeting (online).

Information on refereed presentations prior to 2020 available upon request

Invited Presentations and Workshops

“Adapting to a Post-Ikeda Age: Soka Gakkai’s Evolution after the Loss of Its Charismatic Leader.” Presentation 21 May 2025 at Università di Napoli “l’Orientale,” Naples, Italy.

“The Afterlife of an Assassination: What Dissolution of the Unification Church Portends for Religion and Politics in Japan.” Presentation 19 May 2025 at the University of Oslo, Norway.

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“Religious Nationalism in Contemporary Japan: Making Sense of a Contested Terrain.” Presentation 10 April 2025 at Amherst College, Amherst, MA.

“Catastrophe.” Presentation 31 March 2025 for *Critical Terms for Religious Studies 2nd Edition* book launch conference, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL.

“What Determines when a Disaster Ends? Ways 3.11 Is Articulated by Religious Activists.” Presentation 12 March 2025 for workshop titled “The Art of Recovery: Legacies of the Fukushima Triple Disaster” at the University of Bristol, UK.

“Religion and Politics in Japan after the Abe Assassination: Changing Circumstances and Perennial Fears.” Presentation 12 February 2025 for workshop titled “Religion and Politics in Japan: Historical Legacies, Contemporary Dynamics, and Critical Reflections” at the University of Osaka, Japan.

“The Politics of Dissolution: The Unification Church in Japan after the Abe Assassination.” Presentation 1 June 2024 for “Asian Religions in Law and Litigation” at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, Pittsburgh, PA.

“The Afterlife of an Assassination: Japanese Politics and Policymaking Since the Murder of Abe Shinzō.” Presentation 2 May 2024 for the Analytics Department at the U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC.

“Buddhist Personhood Between Gendered Hierarchies: How Transgender Members of Soka Gakkai in Japan Cultivate Subjectivities.” Presentation 9 February 2024 at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA.

“Gender and Religion in Japan’s Ruling Coalition: Recent Developments.” Presentation 22 December 2023 at Tohoku University, Sendai, Japan.

“Soka Gakkai in Japan: Portraits of Contemporary Members’ Faith-Driven Practices and Political Activism.” Presentation 11 December 2023 at Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan.

“After the Assassination of Abe Shinzō: How Efforts to Dissolve the Unification Church are Shaping Religion and Politics in Japan.” Presentation 16 November 2023 at George Washington University, DC (online).

“Impacts of Religion and Politics on the Multiply Marginalized in Japan: The Lives of Transgender Soka Gakkai Adherents.” Presentation 19 October 2023 for “New Directions in the Study of Religion, Law, and Public Life” at Northwestern University, Evanston, IL.

“Soka Gakkai From the Ground Up: A Look Within Japan’s Most Politically Influential Religion.” Presentation 21 April 2023 at Lewis and Clark College, Portland, OR.

“Religion in Japan after the Abe Assassination: Activism in a Tumultuous Age.” Presentation 20 April 2023 at the Center for Japanese Studies, Portland State University, Portland, OR.

“Strange Bedfellows: Religion and Politics in Contemporary Japan.” Presentation 18 April 2023 for the Yokosuka Council on Asia-Pacific Studies (YCAPS), Japan (online).

“Gendered Perspectives on the Unification Church after the Abe Assassination: Perspectives from Members and Apostates.” Presentation 1 April 2023 with Tomomi Yamaguchi (Montana State University) for the “Workshop

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on Issues of Religion and Politics Since the Abe Assassination” organized by the Constitutional Revision in Japan Research Program, Edwin O. Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies, Harvard University (online).

“Assessing Memories of Religious Aid in an Age of Conflict Over Religion in the Public Sphere.” Presentation 10 March 2023 at Ca’ Foscari University of Venice, Italy (online).

“After the Abe Assassination: Tracking Religion in Japan.” Presentation 2 February 2023 at Florida International University, FL (online).

“Religion and Politics in Japan after the Abe Assassination.” Presentation 20 October 2022 at the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University, New York, NY.

“Why Attention to Religion is Vital to Understanding Politics in Japan.” Presentation 3 October 2022 at the Japan Studies Program, University of Washington, Seattle, WA.

“Religion and Politics in the Aftermath of the Abe Assassination.” Workshop 27 September 2022 at the University of California San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy (online).

“Strange Bedfellows: Religion and Politics in Contemporary Japan.” Workshop 28 June 2022 for the Yokosuka Council on Asia-Pacific Studies (YCAPS), Japan (online).

“Competing Cultivation Regimes: Situating Competition between Nationalist and Soka Gakkai Activists in Japan’s National Diet.” Presentation 16 May 2022 for the workshop “Religion in Reiwa Japan” at the Università di Napoli “l’Orientale,” Naples, Italy.

“Beethoven’s Japanese Buddhist Career: European Classical Music as Buddhist Practice in Soka Gakkai.” Presentation 25 September 2021 for the symposium “Japanese Buddhist Music in Transnational Contexts” at the Sacred Music Center, International Christian University, Tokyo, Japan (online).

“Religion in Modern Japan.” Workshop 13 July 2021 for the Yokosuka Council on Asia-Pacific Studies (YCAPS), Japan (online).

“Soka Gakkai’s Human Revolution: The Rise of a Mimetic Nation in Modern Japan.” Book talk and presentation 1 April 2021 at Duke Kunshan University, China (online).

“Why Scholars of Religion Must Investigate the Corporate Form.” A “Meet the Authors” roundtable 19 March 2021 at the Center for the Study of Religion, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ (online).

Presentation on a decade of post-disaster religious mobilization for 16 March 2021 roundtable titled “Sources of Disaster: New Epistemic Perspectives in Post-3.11 Japan.” Hosted at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin, Germany (online).

“An Uneasy Fit: Buddhist Activists and Divisions between Religion and State under Japan’s 1947 Constitution.” Presentation 11 March 2021 for the Workshop on Buddhism and Comparative Constitutional Law, University of Chicago, IL (online).

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“Japanese Nationalism from the Ground Up: A Profile of Nippon Kaigi and its Local-Level Activists.”
Presentation 25 February 2021 for the Centre for the Study of Global Japan, Munk School of Global Affairs &
Public Policy, University of Toronto, Canada (online).

“Religious Self-Cultivation as Politics: Examples from Grassroots-Level Activism in Japan.” The Robert Morrell
Memorial Lecture in Asian Religions, 11 February 2021, Washington University in St. Louis, MO (online).

“Zooming Clergy, Virtual Laity: Japanese Buddhist Innovations in the Coronascene.” Presentation 6 February
2021 for webinar titled “Sangha in Pandemic Times,” Shinso Ito Center for Japanese Religions and Culture,
University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA (online).

Fieldwork methodology training workshop 14 December 2020 for graduate students in Japanese and Korean
Studies at Freie Universität Berlin, Germany (online).

Soka Gakkai’s Human Revolution discussion 8 December 2020 with faculty and graduate students at the UCLA
Center for Buddhist Studies. Book selected for annual Buddhist Studies author visit (online).

“Amerika ni okeru koronaka no jōkyō to hannō: shūkyō no kanten kara miru keikō to jōhō” (Conditions and
Reactions to the Coronavirus in America: Trends and Data Pertaining to Religion). Presentation (in Japanese) 6
October 2020 for the Japanese Association for Research on Death and Dying (online).

“Discipleship through Classical Music in a Japanese Religion: Beethoven, Buddhism, and Youth Cultivation in
Soka Gakkai.” Presentation 1 October 2020 for the Institute for Japanese Studies at The Ohio State University
(online). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGk5z_hVktY

“Buddhism in the Pandemic.” Pedagogy webinar 8 July 2020 hosted by The Jivaka Project.
<http://www.jivaka.net/buddhism-in-the-pandemic/>

“Japanese Religions in Times of Crisis.” Webinar roundtable 16 June 2020 hosted by the University of California
San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpYKBBURihA&feature=youtu.be>

“East Asia by the Book! Soka Gakkai’s Human Revolution.” Author talk 3 March 2020 at the Seminary Co-op
Bookstore for the Center for East Asian Studies, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL.

“What Japanese Politics Tells Us About Religion.” Presentation 27 February 2020, The Swedish Institute of
International Affairs, Stockholm, Sweden.

“Understanding Religious Nationalism in Japan: Dispatches from the Field.” Presentation 4 February 2020,
Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX.

“Shinto Nationalism and Buddhist Electioneering: Understanding Japanese Politics through Religion.”
Presentation 3 February 2020, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX.

Information on invited presentations prior to 2020 available upon request

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International Conferences and Workshops Organized

“Bridging the Methodological Divide: Devising Collaborative Quantitative and Qualitative Research Projects on Japan.” Workshop 31 October to 2 November 2019 co-organized with Kiyoteru Tsutsui at the Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

“The Aesthetics of Religious Belonging.” Workshop 26 June 2018 co-organized with Elizabeth Williams Ørberg at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

“Salvage and Salvation: Religion, Disaster Relief, and Reconstruction in Asia.” Conference 22 and 23 November 2012 co-organized with Patrick Daly, Michael Feener, and Philip Fountain at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Selected Presentations to Policymakers, K-12 Educators, and the General Public

“Religion in Japan: Past and Present.” Presentation 4 November 2025 for K-12 teachers, coordinated by the Program for Teaching East Asia, University of Colorado Boulder (online).

“Strange Bedfellows: Religion and Politics in Japan.” Presentation 29 April 2025 for the NCSU Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, Raleigh, NC.

“Religion in Japan.” Presentation 9 February 2023 for K-12 teachers, coordinated by the Program for Teaching East Asia, University of Colorado Boulder (online).

“Religion in Everyday Life: A Look at Contemporary Japan.” Presentation 22 March 2018 for K-12 educators, World View East Asia Seminar, UNC-Chapel Hill, NC.

“The Paradox of Religion in Japan: Implications for Japanese Politics.” Presentation 28 April 2017 to the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Office of Analytic Outreach, United States Department of State, Washington, DC.

“Japan’s Ruling Coalition Gets Religion.” Presentation 9 June 2016 for the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation “Views from the U.S.-Japan Network for the Future” public symposium, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

Op-Eds, Articles for General Audiences and Policymakers, and Other Commentary

d’Avignon, Robyn and Levi McLaughlin. “Science and Religion across Senegal and Japan.” Dialogue posted 12 October 2025 for *The Immanent Frame* forum on “Sensing the Social.”

McLaughlin, Levi. “In Religion-Averse Japan, a Religion-Backed Party Remains Pivotal.” *Berkley Forum* 25 November 2024.

McLaughlin, Levi. “With the Liberal Democratic Party Struggling, Komeito’s More Vital to Japan’s Ruling Coalition Than Ever Before.” *Sasakawa USA Japan Political Pulse* 26 January 2024.

McLaughlin, Levi. “The Abe Assassination and Japan’s Nexus of Religion and Politics.” *Current History*

LEVI MCLAUGHLIN

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, North Carolina State University, Withers 425
Raleigh NC 27695-8103 lmclaug2@ncsu.edu

September 2023, 209-216.

McLaughlin, Levi. “Church Drama is a Dilemma for Kishida.” *East Asia Forum* 27 September 2022.

McLaughlin, Levi. “A Grudge Against the Unification Church Motivated the Murder of Japan’s Most Prominent Politician.” *criticalasianstudies.org* commentary board 13 July 2022.

Harris, Tobias and Levi McLaughlin. “The Small Pacifist Party That Could Shape Japan’s Future.” *Foreign Policy* 4 November 2021.

McLaughlin, Levi. “Prayer as Action: Buddhist Priests During COVID-19 in Japan.” *Dharma World* Spring 2021, 22-25.

McLaughlin, Levi and Deonnie Moodie. “Making Persons, Cultures, and Nations.” Dialogue posted 7 May 2021 for *The Immanent Frame* forum on “The Corporate Form.”

McLaughlin, Levi, Aike P. Rots, Jolyon Baraka Thomas, and Chika Watanabe. “Investigating the Corporate Form in Practice: Heterarchy, *hitozukuri*, Hello Kitty, and the Public Good.” Essay posted 2 April 2021 for *The Immanent Frame* forum on “The Corporate Form” dedicated to the 2020 *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* article by the essay authors.

Information on op-eds and published commentaries up to 2020 available upon request

Selected Interviews, Podcasts, etc.

Conversation with Tobias Harris on the Observing Japan substack: “The Past, Present, and Future of Kōmeitō,” 23 July 2025.

Interview on “Sunday,” BBC Radio 4, about the legal dissolution of the Unification Church in Japan, 30 March 2025.

Interview on “Inside Asia” by the Center for Asian Democracy, University of Louisville: “Inside the Abe Assassination, Religion and Japanese Politics,” 27 November 2023.

Conversation with Tobias Harris on the Observing Japan substack: “The Death of Ikeda Daisaku,” November 2023.

Interview on NPR: “Japan’s Government Asks Court to Revoke Legal Status of Unification Church,” 13 October 2023.

Interview on BBC World Business Report on the Unification Church in Japan and reactions against religion/politics connections following the assassination of former Prime Minister Abe Shinzō, 11 August 2022.

Discussion of religion and politics in Japan and religious motivations for the assassination of former Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzō with Kaitlyn Ugoretz (UC Santa Barbara) at Conversation Six, 14 July 2022.

“Michigan Talks Japan” Episode One, 10 June 2020.

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Raleigh NC 27695-8103 lmclaug2@ncsu.edu

“Religious Responses to COVID-19.” Japan on the Record podcast, 15 May 2020.

Information on interviews and other broadcasts up to 2020 available upon request

TEACHING

Areas of expertise include Asian religions (particularly traditions of Japan and China), history of modern Asia, theories and methodologies of the study of religion, religion and politics, Buddhism in Asia and in global diaspora, anthropology of religion, fieldwork methodology, religion and disaster, religion and humanitarianism.

Fall 2012 to present

North Carolina State University, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies. Courses taught: *Religious Traditions of the World; Japanese Religions; The Buddhist Traditions; Introduction to the Study of Religion; Asian Religions; Religion, Disaster, and Development; Critical Thinking in American Life: Engaging Across Difference*; and *Religion and Politics in Global Perspective*. Also serves on Ph.D. committees and instructor for graduate reading courses as Adjunct Professor at the Department of Religious Studies, Duke University, and the Department of Religious Studies, University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill.

Fall 2019

University of Michigan, Center for Japanese Studies. Course taught: *Strange Bedfellows: Religion and Political Activism in Japan*.

Spring 2012

University of Iowa, Department of Anthropology. Courses taught: *Religion and the State in Modern Asia* and *Investigating Youth Culture in Japan*.

September 2009 to May 2011

Wofford College, Department of Religion. Courses taught: *Religion in China, Japan, and Korea; Anthropology of Religion; Japanese Religion through Popular Culture; Experiencing Religious Lives: Fieldwork on Religion; Japan* (led Wofford students on a study tour of Tokyo and Kyoto, January 2011).

SELECTED UNIVERSITY SERVICE, NC State Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

College of Humanities and Social Sciences Grant and Fellowship Proposal Mentor, 2025-present.

Faculty Executive Committee, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, 2024-present.

Office of Undergraduate Research Award Committee (university-level), 2023-2024.

Religious Studies Major Advisor, 2021-present.

Member, Religious Studies Curriculum Committee, 2020-present.

Member, Post-Tenure Review Committee, Philosophy & Religious Studies, 2020-present.

Member, Philosophy & Religious Studies Diversity Committee, 2014-18, 2020-present.

Coordinator, Religious Studies Colloquium Series, 2013-18, 2020-2023.

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SELECTED PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Committee Work

Reviewer, American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Fellowships.

Evaluator, Social Science Fellowships Program, National Endowment for the Humanities.

Member, American Advisory Committee for Japanese Studies, The Japan Foundation, 2022-present.

Co-Chair, Japanese Religions Unit, American Academy of Religion, 2017 to 2022. On Unit steering committee from 2011-2022.

Officer and Secretary, Society for the Study of Japanese Religions (American Academy of Religion affiliate), 2013-2018.

Editorial Work and Manuscript Review

Editorial Board member, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, *Journal of Global Buddhism*, and *Contemporary Buddhism*, 2021 to present.

Peer Reviewer of articles and book manuscripts submitted to Bloomsbury, Brill, Cambridge University Press, Routledge, University of Hawai'i Press, the journals *Asian Ethnology*; *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*; *Contemporary Buddhism*; *Cultural Anthropology*; *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*; *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*; *Japan Review*; *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*; *Journal of Global Buddhism*; *Journal of Japanese Studies*; *Nova Religio*; *Politics and Religion*; *Politics, Religion & Ideology*; *positions*; *Public Administration and Policy*; *Religion, State & Society*; *Social Science Japan Journal*; *Yin-Cheng Journal of Contemporary Buddhism*, and others, 2008 to present.

Other Professional Service and Affiliations

Affiliate, Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2024-present.

Member, Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation U.S.-Japan Network for the Future Cohort III, June 2014 to June 2016.

Supervisor, responsible for establishing Wofford College as a host institution for a resident community outreach coordinator from 2010 to 2013 as part of the Japan Outreach Initiative, funded by the Japan Foundation and the Laurasian Institution.

MUSICAL ACTIVITIES AND AWARDS

K. Alan Turner Prize for winning the University of Toronto Hart House Orchestra Concerto Competition (performed the Khachaturian Violin Concerto), Spring 1993.

1989 to present

Violinist

LEVI MCLAUGHLIN

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Raleigh NC 27695-8103 lmclaug2@ncsu.edu

Professional and amateur performances in Canada, Japan, and the United States, including solo recitals, recordings, orchestra concertmaster positions and extensive fieldwork playing music in Japan.

2022- present

Violinist with the Raleigh Civic Chamber Orchestra and Raleigh Civic Symphony Orchestra, North Carolina State University

Association Memberships

American Academy of Religion

Association for Asian Studies

European Association for Japanese Studies

Japanese Association for Religious Studies / 日本宗教学会

References available upon request